



*Chair, Families & Human  
Services Committee  
Appropriations Committee:  
Chair, Family Independence  
Agency, Commerce Labor  
& Economic Development,  
Capitol Outlay,  
Higher Education*

SENATOR  
**BILL HARDIMAN**

***E-Hardiman Herald***



***December 2003***

*Dear Friends:*

2003 has been an incredibly eventful year. We have experienced a very challenging economy and a complicated state budget. As a nation, we have fought a difficult war and still face great challenges ahead as we continue the fight against terrorism and the rebuilding of Iraq.

While we were certainly distressed by these events, we have much for which to be thankful. We have a balanced budget in state government and are seeing signs of an improving economy in 2004. Our citizens of this great country have united in supporting our men and women who are serving in the Armed Forces. These are just a few of the reasons for thankfulness during this blessed holiday season.

God's gifts of love, peace, and joy...may these be yours at Christmas.

As we enter the New Year, let us do so with a sense of hope. Let us maintain unity and bipartisanship in our State during difficult budget times. Let us allow our patriotism to shine forth. Let us continue to pray for President Bush, the Governor, and all of our leaders who are managing the affairs of our great country, state, and communities. Let us continue to pray for and support those who suffer from the loss of family and friends.

I wish you a safe and prosperous year. May God bless you and your family during this holiday season.

Senator Bill Hardiman

### **Budget deal reached**

Legislators and the governor reached a compromise this week to solve Michigan's \$920 million budget deficit. The deal guarantees an income-tax cut in 2004 while providing additional revenue to soften cuts to public schools, higher education and local governments. It also includes an

incentive for small businesses to provide greater healthcare benefits to their employees by reducing an onerous tax burden 50 percent by 2007. The income-tax rollback will be paused for six months and an additional \$12 million in administrative cuts for state government will be made. The cuts to K-12, higher education and revenue sharing were reduced from the governor's original proposal because the Senate Republicans insisted that the roughly \$77 million raised by pausing the rollback be divided among schools, universities and local governments.

### **Michigan elections to be consolidated**

Legislation passed in the Senate will consolidate Michigan elections to four specific dates each year. The four dates are the fourth Tuesday in February and the first Tuesday following the first Monday in May, August and November. A fifth floater date is possible for school districts to hold a milage or bond issue if enough petition signatures are obtained. All elections in the state will now be conducted by county, township or municipal clerks which will remove confusion about where a person applies for an absentee ballot or who they contact to register to vote.

### **Senate passes ID theft protection package**

The Senate overwhelmingly passed a broad effort to stop the explosion of identity theft in Michigan and help victims get their good credit back. In 2002 alone, more than 160,000 people — 4,640 in Michigan — reported having their identity stolen to the Federal Trade Commission.

Key parts of the package would prohibit denying or reducing credit to ID theft victims; stop soliciting or extending credit to consumers by mailing unsolicited checks and similar items; give police and prosecutors the power to open criminal investigations and bring cases in the jurisdiction where the victim resides or where the crime was committed; and create a standardized certificate ID theft victims can use to prove their identity has been used for fraudulent purposes so they can restore their credit histories more quickly.

### **Traffic signal controllers to be outlawed**

The Senate passed legislation outlawing the purchase, possession and use of traffic-signal controllers. The two-bill package makes it illegal for unauthorized persons to sell, purchase and use signal preemption devices. Offenders using the devices resulting in a crash causing death could face felony charges with up to 15 years in prison and a fine of \$25,000. The devices emit a beam to receivers installed at intersections and, when within a 1,500-foot range, change the signal immediately from red to green. The devices are intended for use only by emergency personnel when responding to an accident.

### **Billboard legislation will protect Michigan's beauty**

Legislation introduced in the Senate would preserve Michigan's beautiful vistas by exploring advertising opportunities for businesses other than billboards. The legislation would not eliminate billboards, but instead find other ways to help businesses advertise. One component of the legislation would add a fifth logo for tourism on state Department of Transportation highway signs. Currently there are logos for food, fuel, lodging and camping. Another part of the legislation would place a moratorium on new billboard permits and require abandoned billboards

to be removed. The bills are being considered by the Senate Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Committee and the Senate Transportation Committee.

### **Senate to consider CCW permit reform**

Legislation introduced in the Michigan Senate would transfer the authority to issue concealed weapons permits from local county gun boards to the Secretary of State. Under Senate Bill 891, individuals seeking weapons permits would apply at their local Secretary of State office rather than through their county clerk. The legislation and Senate Bill 892, a companion bill, now go before the Senate Judiciary Committee.

### **New specialty license plate**

Michigan motorists may soon have another option for a specialty license plate under a bill passed by the Senate. A state-sponsored fund-raising plate for the Michigan chapter of Ducks Unlimited would be created and sold by the Secretary of State for an additional \$25. The money received from the sale of these plates will be used by the non-profit organization to protect, enhance, restore, manage and acquire wetlands and associated uplands in this state. This plate joins seven other state-sponsored fund-raising plates and 15 university sponsored plates.

In addition, a bill establishing new criteria that organizations must meet in order to create a new specialty plate was passed by the Senate and reported out of the House Transportation Committee recently. This bill is designed to prevent Michigan taxpayers from paying start-up costs for specialty plates that may not sell and to prevent confusion in the law enforcement community by requiring plates to meet a standard format.

### **Senate acts to grow Michigan's economy**

The Senate passed a venture capital package to help make Michigan more attractive to business investment as part of the Republicans' JOBS plan. JOBS - Job Opportunities for Business Success - is an initiative put forth by House and Senate Republicans to revitalize the Michigan economy and get its residents back to work. Venture capital allows entrepreneurs to start businesses, frequently high-tech ventures, and create the jobs of tomorrow. Michigan currently ranks 34th among the 50 states in venture capital investments. The majority of high-tech industrial states rank well above Michigan. Most Great Lakes states outrank Michigan as well, including Minnesota (16<sup>th</sup>), Pennsylvania (17<sup>th</sup>), Illinois (18<sup>th</sup>), Ohio (31<sup>st</sup>), and Wisconsin (32<sup>nd</sup>). The venture capital package now heads to the House of Representatives for consideration.

### **Senate calls for manufacturing, small-business "czars"**

The Michigan Senate passed legislation to create "czars" to help manufacturers and small businesses cut through red tape. Senate Bills 840 and 841 call on the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to provide a small-business "czar" and a manufacturing "czar" with the experience and vision to focus on small-business start-ups, as well as retaining and creating manufacturing jobs. The bills now go to the House for consideration.

The bills are part of the JOBS plan - Job Opportunities for Business Success - recently introduced by Senate and House Republicans. The JOBS plan would help create manufacturing jobs, spur new small-business investment for more job opportunities, and provide incentives to expand the state's slow-moving economy by getting Michigan residents back to work.

### **Recycling package introduced**

In an effort to make Michigan a top recycling state, legislation has been introduced to design a comprehensive statewide recycling program. Michigan currently ranks near the bottom of all states with just a 20-percent recycling rate. The package is a result of recommendations from the Michigan Beverage Container and Recycling Task Force to stimulate statewide recycling.

Among the legislation are provisions to create a new litter incentive program that allows individuals to qualify for a cash award if they provide information leading to a conviction under the anti-litter statute. A state anti-litter hotline to allow an individual to make a report on litter violations also would be created. The legislation also would make changes to the Adopt-a-Trail, Adopt-a-Park, Adopt-a-Shoreline and Adopt-a-River programs to allow volunteer groups to report on the volume and type of waste they collect.

### **Land Bank Fast Track**

Members of the Michigan Senate will soon consider a six-bill package to aid urban redevelopment. The Land Bank Fast Track package, House Bills 4480-4484 and 4488, will establish an authority to clear property titles and move tax reverted property to private ownership. The legislation creates a process for abandoned properties to be redeveloped by providing a funding source. In lieu of general property tax for land returned to private ownership, the legislation creates a tax with 50 percent going to the local communities and the other half making the authority self-supporting.

### **Contact Information**

The Hardiman Herald by Senator Bill Hardiman is designed to provide residents and organizations with a timely update of his activity in Lansing. If you have any questions or do not wish to receive this e-mail, please contact Senator Hardiman's office.

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